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ABSTRACT

Pursuant to the Council of Ontario Universities' procedures for periodic quality reviews of undergraduate programs, auditors examined the policies and programs of Brock University (BU) during 1997. Three departments were selected for audits of their program review procedures: Philosophy, Geography, and Physics; additionally, the Oenology and Viticulture Program was selected as a sample of a new program. After examining BU's internal review policies and the complete record of the program reviews, and finding evidence that mechanisms were in place to implement recommendations, the auditors held a site visit. Following a brief introduction and description of the methodology used in the audit, the report includes: (1) a description of BU program reviews; (2) the general principles and guidelines used for BU undergraduate reviews; (3) conformity of the BU review process for existing undergraduate programs with audit committee procedures; (4) conformity of BU policy for implementing new undergraduate programs with the audit committee framework for new programs; (5) the report's conclusions, highlighting BU's close conformity with the audit committee framework; and (6) a summary of recommendations and suggestions. (Contains the schedule for the first cycle of audits (1997-2003), lists of auditors and BU principal documents, and site visit schedule.) (MAB)

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ED 420 262

REPORT OF THE AUDITORS ON
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM REVIEWS

BROCK UNIVERSITY - 1997

COUNCIL OF ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
CONSEIL DES UNIVERSITÉS DE L'ONTARIO

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Report of the UPRAC Auditors on

Undergraduate Program Reviews at Brock University

September 1997

Prepared under the authority of the
Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee,
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Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

CAP	Committee on Academic Policy, a Standing Committee of the Senate of Brock University
COU	Council of Ontario Universities
MET	Ministry of Education and Training
OCAV	Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents
OCGS	Ontario Council on Graduate Studies
UPRAC	Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee
UPRAC Procedures	Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee Procedures refers to the OCAV Constitution, Bylaw 1, Appendix A.
UPR Framework	Undergraduate Program Review Framework refers to the Objective, Structure and Elements of the Undergraduate Program Review Procedure found in the OCAV Constitution, Bylaw 1, Appendix A, Section 1.

1 Introduction

In October 1996, the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) approved the establishment of a procedure for the systematic auditing of the policies and processes in place at all Ontario universities for the conduct of periodic quality reviews of undergraduate programs. The procedure and guidelines specify that auditing of processes includes the examination of a representative sample of the quality reviews. Subsequently, in February 1997, the guidelines were amended to include the auditing of the mechanisms used by the universities for the implementation of new undergraduate programs. Authority for the organization and management of the audits is vested in the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV). The detailed oversight of the audit procedure is devolved to a committee of OCAV, the Undergraduate Program Audit Review Committee (UPRAC), whose responsibilities are set out in Bylaw 1 of the OCAV Constitution. One of UPRAC's duties is to recommend to OCAV the schedule of audits, which started in 1997 with Brock University and the University of Ottawa. The schedule for the first cycle was approved by OCAV at its meeting of February 27, 1997 and is displayed in Appendix 1.

The audits themselves are conducted at arm's length by at least three auditors who are appointed by UPRAC according to the criteria in the bylaw: "Auditors shall be chosen for their recognized strength in the development and operation of undergraduate programs. They shall not hold an administrative appointment in an Ontario university during their terms as auditors." (See Appendix 2 for the names and affiliations of the Auditors for 1997.) The procedures to be followed by the Auditors are spelled out in the Procedures for the Audit of Undergraduate Program Reviews, Appendix A of the bylaw, hereafter called the UPRAC Procedures. It describes in some detail "the objective, structure and elements" that "any credible periodic undergraduate program review procedure undertaken by an institution must include." For convenience, these key review components can be described as the Undergraduate Program Review Framework, and will be referred to hereafter as the UPR Framework.

A critical caveat having to do with the timing of the introduction of the UPRAC Procedures and the first few institutional audits must be entered here. Those universities whose review policies and practices are being audited in the early years of the first cycle of audits will have had in place review policies that predate the approval of the UPRAC Procedures. This means that the program reviews sampled for the audit will have been conducted following institutional policies and processes that may not incorporate every aspect of the UPR Framework. Within these constraints, the Auditors could not apply the UPR Framework retroactively as a standard against which the university's practices must be measured. The components of the UPR Framework have, therefore, been used as markers of "best practice" and as signposts for improvements. Specific suggestions and recommendations are accordingly made with a formative intent.

In framing the report and presenting their findings, the Auditors have found it helpful to distinguish between recommendations and suggestions. Instances where the Auditors consider the policies and procedures not to be in conformity with the UPR Framework are cast as recommendations. They have made suggestions in cases where, although the review process is in conformity with the UPR Framework, they think the process could be improved. It will be noted that some recommendations and suggestions are, in fact, generic in nature and may be relevant to many institutions.

The Auditors also wish to record that they have found some parts of the UPR Framework to be open to interpretation, and for that reason they have applied it with "interpretive charity." It should be emphasized that in no way do they think that this has weakened the audit process. To the contrary, just as there is room for improvement in the way in which institutions conduct their quality reviews, so too the UPR Framework may be improved. The Auditors will be reporting separately to OCAV on those aspects of the procedure that should be modified or clarified.

2 Methodology and Verification Steps

In preparation for their work, the Auditors requested from Brock University a copy of the current policies for conducting undergraduate program reviews and implementing new programs, plus the schedule of programs that had been reviewed and those slated for future review.

To satisfy the injunction in the UPRAC Procedures that "the Auditors will take into account the diversity of educational programs offered by the university, whenever possible," the reviews of three Brock programs were chosen for the audit, one from the humanities (Philosophy), one from the social sciences (Geography), and one from the physical sciences (Physics). The Oenology and Viticulture Program was selected as an example of a new program.

As outlined in the UPRAC Procedures, the university was requested to provide "general documents that present the [undergraduate program] review practices and policies adopted and implemented by the institution" and "any additional documents they deem appropriate." Relevant documentation would include:

- the internal review policies in place at the time of the review of each program where they differed from those currently in force;
- the complete record of the reviews chosen for audit:
  - the programs' self-appraisal documents;
  - the evaluations of external experts;
  - the appraisals by peers internal to the university but outside the program under review;
  - the responses, if any, to the evaluations at all levels;
  - the minutes of any discussion at Senate (or one of its standing committees); and

- evidence that mechanisms are in place to act on the recommendations arising from the process.

(A list of the principal documents provided by Brock University is included in Appendix 3.)

Having met and reviewed the documentary record, the Auditors paid a site visit to the university on May 8, 1997. During the visit, they met with the Acting President, the deans of the three faculties, and the chairs, and in some cases faculty members, of the departments whose program reviews had been selected for audit. There was also a session with the chair and members of the Committee on Academic Policy and the Chair of the Senate. (The schedule of meetings for the site visit is provided in Appendix 4.)

The Auditors would like to record their appreciation for the assistance and cooperation they received from all those involved with their visit and the provision of documentation. Everyone concerned approached the task with an understanding of its importance; it was viewed not as an intrusion, but rather as an opportunity to reflect on what it is that universities can and should be doing to improve their undergraduate programs.

3 Program Reviews at Brock University

3.1 Existing Programs

For many years, undergraduate programs at Brock University have undergone quality reviews which included the use of external evaluators. Initially, the reviews tended to be conducted on an ad hoc basis at the instigation of a department chair. In 1992, the Vice-President, Academic, introduced more systematic organization of reviews on a university-wide basis, with standardized terms of reference and guidelines for external reviewers that are set out in the document entitled Department or Program Review. These terms of reference and guidelines were those that were in effect at the university when the programs sampled for the audit were reviewed.

In February 1996, the Brock Senate approved a more formal policy, External Review of Undergraduate Programs. This new policy predates slightly the adoption of the UPRAC procedures. Nevertheless, both the policy and the earlier practices and guidelines anticipated many of the review components set out in the UPR Framework. The Auditors had both the 1992 and 1996 procedures available and they will be discussed in sections 4 and 5.

From the time of the introduction of the more systematic approach to reviews in 1992 to the approval of the 1996 Senate policy, 15 reviews were conducted. The university has established a schedule for the complete first cycle of program reviews by 2003 using the 1996 protocol; two have been completed, 30 are scheduled, and three new programs must be added (see the table that follows).

Schedule of Reviews of Existing Undergraduate Programs at Brock University

Faculty	Completed 1992-19956	Under February 1996 Policy	
		Completed or underway 1996-97	Planned 1997-2003
Business	—	1	—
Education	—	—	1
Humanities	4	—	11
Mathematics and Science	5	—	6
Physical and Health Education	—	—	3
Social Sciences	6	1	9
Total	15	2	30

At Brock, interdisciplinary programs are reviewed either as freestanding programs or as part of the reviews of the academic units that have responsibility for the programs.

Brock's policy statement, External Review of Undergraduate Programs, envisages that "each Department should be reviewed at least once every seven years."

3.2 New Programs

According to the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education and Training (MET), the implementation of new programs in Ontario universities should be preceded by their introduction in universities' five-year plans. Once introduced in the five-year plan, new programs are implemented by universities as resources permit and opportunities arise. Therefore, the time frame during which new programs pass from the stage of introduction in the university's five-year plan to implementation varies. Three new programs were introduced recently by Brock University.

4 General Principles and Guidelines Used for Undergraduate Reviews at Brock University

4.1 Existing Programs

Brock's policy governing the review of its undergraduate programs is contained in the document entitled External Review of Undergraduate Programs, which was revised by Senate in February 1996. It sets out the process to be followed and is the authoritative basis for conduct of reviews. A second document (undated) entitled Department or Program Review, which was introduced in 1992, continues to be available for use as a source of guidance for external evaluators. It contains a list of questions organized under a series of headings on which external reviewers might be expected to comment.

The External Review of Undergraduate Programs policy statement begins by enunciating the principle that each department will be reviewed at least once every seven years, with the sequence determined by the dean in consultation with chairs and directors. Such reviews examine the programs offered by the department and, where relevant, the links to other departments that offer support to these programs, or with which the department has interactions.

One year in advance of a review, the dean is charged to choose reviewers "from other Canadian universities, although representatives of industry and business may also be suitable in some cases" again in consultation with the department under review. (The number of reviewers may vary depending on the discipline.)

In advance of the site visit, the department is responsible for preparing materials to "include the undergraduate calendar, outlines and other handouts for all courses, a record of enrollment over three years in all courses, information on teaching loads, *curricula vitarum* [sic] of all faculty, graduation rates and any other information which is appropriate."

The dean is responsible for "specific" terms of reference, but the responsibilities of the reviewers generally include scrutiny of the departmental materials, site visit and preparation of a report. The Brock procedures make a special point of additionally charging external reviewers with responding to queries arising from their reports.

The policy suggests an itinerary for the site visit, which should last "at least one and a half days" and include meetings with faculty, staff, students, teaching assistants and the chair of the department. Representatives from the library and from other units with which the department has joint programs or other interactions should also be included. The dean is expected to meet with the external reviewers at the beginning and at the end of the visit. The Vice-President, Academic, and "heads of administrative units providing significant support to the academic unit under review" are also interviewed.

The policy goes on to illustrate the kinds of issues reviewers should address in the written report. The report should include critical comments on:

- the curriculum:
  - its stated goals;
  - its modernity;
  - the skills it provides to students;
  - its gender equity; and
  - its flexibility to accommodate differing student needs
- the significance of enrolment patterns within the department

In addition to these issues, deans may also draw from the questions contained in the document Department or Program Review referred to above.

Reviewers tender their reports to the dean, who in turn transmits the reviews to the department and "to other departments that participated in the review such as those involved in joint programs." Departments are enjoined to discuss the reviewers' recommendations and "submit questions or requests for clarification to a reviewer." By way of follow-up, "the Dean will meet with the Chair and/or the department to consider implementation of recommendations which may be appropriate."

The dean then transmits the reviewers' reports to the Senate for referral to the Committee on Academic Policy (CAP), which discusses the reports and the departmental response, and may request that departments and/or the faculty dean "report back to CAP about progress on implementation of appropriate recommendations in the report."

Finally, CAP annually provides a summary and copies of the external reviews to the Senate, which discusses the summary report "and, when appropriate, transmit(s) the document to the university President for distribution to the Board of Trustees."

4.2 New Programs

The university's policy and practice for the introduction of new programs is now guided to a large extent by the current requirements of MET as set out initially in the memorandum dated November 8, 1996 from the Assistant Deputy Minister to the Executive Heads and reconfirmed in a subsequent memorandum on June 24, 1997 from the Director of the Universities Affairs Branch . The programs approval process is described as one of self-administered regulation and calls for the institutions to certify that their proposals meet six criteria: program nomenclature (or "truth-in-advertising"), academic quality, financial viability, institutional appropriateness, student demand and societal need. A seventh criterion, duplication, is evaluated by the Ministry. ("Core" undergraduate Arts and Science programs are exempted from this process.)

Internally at Brock, CAP is charged in its terms of reference [Faculty Handbook Section II: 9.4.1 a) and b)] with the responsibility for making recommendations to the Senate on "the academic philosophy of Brock University in relation to the consideration of new programs, criteria for the evaluation of such programs, [and] the establishment of program priorities and relationships between existing or proposed programs of study." The Standing Committee also recommends for approval by the Senate all new undergraduate degrees and programs. Before being presented to CAP, new programs are normally reviewed by the appropriate departments and faculty undergraduate curriculum committees.

5 Conformity of the Brock University Review Process for Existing Undergraduate Programs to the Expectations of the UPRAC Procedures

The UPRAC Procedures specify that the report of the Auditors will include comments on how well the procedures and process of the institution under review conform to the objectives, structure and elements they establish (the UPR Framework). They also specify that the Auditors should provide details on "how well the review procedure and process conform to the institution's own policies." This provision is especially important at the inception of the audit process.

As all the program reviews selected for audit in 1997 were conducted prior to the adoption of the UPRAC Procedures, a negative judgment relative to that standard would be both uninformative and unfair, since the local practices could not have been designed with the UPR Framework in mind. Second, it was evident to the Auditors that local review procedures are in a state of flux, and that actual practice has in many regards outstripped the policy statement. Finally, while the expectation is that all Ontario institutions will generate program review policies that reflect at least the minimum requirements of the UPR Framework (if they have not already done so), it is now, and will doubtless always be, the case that, to accommodate universities' diverse needs, local review policies go beyond the minimum that the UPR Framework requires in different ways that call for verification.

These comments on conformity are organized into two parts:

- conformity of Brock University's procedures to its policy in the period 1992-1996, and
- conformity of Brock University's policies for program reviews to the UPR Framework.

In the first part, the comments deal with the practice that was followed in the period 1992 to 1995 during which time the reviews selected for audit at Brock University took place. The second part assesses the February 1996 policy, which was developed before the UPRAC Procedures were finalized.

5.1 Conformity of Brock University's Procedures for Program Reviews to its Policy in the Period 1992 to 1995

To anticipate the conclusion reached below, Brock's procedures and process — in all matters that the Auditors have been able to verify — from 1992 to 1995 appear to have anticipated the policy it adopted formally in 1996, which in turn incorporates to a large extent the components of the UPR Framework. The Auditors were impressed by the obvious commitment of those they met at Brock to the review process and to making it effective.

The deans confirmed that they assumed responsibility for sequencing the reviews and for choosing the external reviewers. They explained the considerations that bore on their decisions. They also confirmed that, in addition to the materials specified in the policy, they ask departments to prepare a brief for the external reviewers; this was already evident from the documentation provided in response to our request. Another feature on which the deans insisted was the formative character of the review process. Finally, in their own reflection on what worked and what did not in the review process, they were in general agreement that much of the data on which reviews depended were, at a minimum, difficult to access and difficult to use.

> **Suggestion 1:** The difficulty in making relevant data and analysis available to those involved in the review is by no means unique to Brock. If, however, reviews are to be meaningful, and if recommendations and decisions on whether or not to accept them are to be based on evidence, it is vitally important that Brock and other universities address the perceived difficulties in the manner that best accords with their individual needs and organization.

The Auditors found that, in virtually every example that they were able to probe, recommendations made by external reviewers were taken seriously, even when they were not ultimately accepted. The Auditors state that, in their view, "serious consideration" is the appropriate standard to bring to bear in assessing the responses of units under review to formative recommendations, which are counsel and not command. In one instance where a query was referred back to reviewers, the department rejected a recommendation about its first-year teaching formats that would have saved money because it was incompatible with the department's informing philosophy and would, in its judgment, have compromised quality.

Two out of three audited reviews were scrupulously organized around the 10 categories in the Department or Program Review (1992) guidelines. (In one case, the same extra dimension highlighting a particular local issue was added by the two reviewers). In the third case, the dean charged the single external reviewer with responding to three questions, which are related, but not identical to, the questions in the Department or Program Review document: viz., "Is the undergraduate sequence of courses suitable for majors? Is the course content modern and

appropriate? Are the "service courses" provided by the Department meeting the needs of students from other Departments?"

The Auditors conclude, based on examination of the documentation provided and interviews with interested parties, that the procedures and process in place at the time the reviews were conducted were generally observed in the three cases that were audited.

5.2 Conformity of Brock University's Policy for Program Reviews to the UPR Framework

In making recommendations and suggestions for improving what are already a sound policy and procedure, the Auditors once more wish to emphasize their awareness that the 1996 policy — and the program reviews that were audited — predate the UPRAC Procedures. Though none of the audited program reviews were conducted under the 1996 Brock policy, this policy incorporates much of the practice that was followed between 1992 and 1995 and much that is in the UPR Framework. The conformity assessment evaluates the policy against the objective, structure and elements of the Undergraduate Program Review Procedure contained in the UPRAC Procedures. These components of the UPR Framework appear in italics below.

5.2.1 *Objective of the Undergraduate Program Review Procedure*

The objective of the institutional periodic undergraduate program review procedure is to assess the quality of the undergraduate programs that the university provides in all areas of study.

The Brock policy does not explicitly state the objective for the review procedure though it was obvious at the meetings with the Auditors that all those involved clearly understood the essential purpose of the review to be a means of ensuring a regular and formal assessment of quality. Most often, the appropriate and convenient academic entity for review is the department or a similar organizational unit. Yet it is the quality assurance of the undergraduate **program** review process that is to be audited. Programs may be, and often are, co-terminus with departments, and institutions may, for a number of reasons, wish to incorporate program reviews into the reviews of the organizational units that offer the programs. This point may be obvious, but it is made here in order to emphasize that institutional program review processes (including the policies and procedures) should deal explicitly with those programs that span departmental lines. Interdisciplinary programs are the most common of these, and they are a major feature of the Brock academic landscape.

Though the policy specifies that external reviewers should meet "other Departments that have joint programs or other interactions with the Departments under review" and that copies of the

reviewers' reports should go to those "other Departments," it could, nevertheless, be more explicit in its reference to interdisciplinary programs.

It is also important to ensure that any graduate program offered by the department/academic unit whose undergraduate program is being evaluated does not overshadow the review of the undergraduate program.

> **Recommendation 1**: The Brock policy should be amended to include a clear statement of the objective(s) for the reviews of existing undergraduate programs. Given the importance of interdisciplinary programs to the university, the policy should indicate clearly how they are reviewed.

5.2.2 *Structure of the Undergraduate Program Review Procedure*

The institutional undergraduate program review policy statement should:

(1) identify an authority responsible for application of the policy;

The deans have a major role in the "application of the policy" and, independently, they are responsible for the reviews within their faculties. However, it is not clear from the External Review of Undergraduate Programs document that they are the "authority" in the meaning of the UPR Framework. The Vice-President, Academic, took a lead in the move to systematize the review process and is kept informed by the deans of reviews that are planned and underway, but the Vice-President, Academic, does not have a specified role in the review process — other than meeting the external reviewer(s). In some instances it would appear that the actions of the deans are subject to the oversight of CAP, which may request a report from the appropriate dean "about progress on implementation of appropriate recommendations in the report." Ultimately, a summary by CAP and copies of the external reviews are discussed by the Senate, but only on an annual basis.

> **Suggestion 2:** The absence in the policy of reference to a central authority with ultimate responsibility for the reviews need never cause a problem at Brock, since it is clear to all of the parties concerned that the review process is vital to the academic health of the institution, and the Auditors are satisfied as to their commitment to the process. However, since the Auditors understand that CAP is disposed to review the policy document in fuller light of the UPR Framework, they commend this matter to their attention and that of the Vice-President, Academic.

(2) define the undergraduate program review criteria;

The UPR Framework requires that institutions be explicit about the issues to be addressed in the review process. In this sense, Brock's Department or Program Review document is most helpful and continues to guide the deans as they draft the terms of reference for external reviewers. The current Brock policy document also lists some important questions that should be addressed. (The subjects raised in these two documents might equally be put to the departments under review — see section 5.2.2 (3) a) below.)

> **Suggestion 3:** The document Department or Program Review or some version of it might usefully be added as an appendix to the policy document in order to more explicitly "define the undergraduate program review criteria."

(3) prescribe at least the following steps:

a) self-appraisal by professors and students participating in the program;

As indicated above, though a self-appraisal is not required by Brock's policy, in practice deans have encouraged departments to conduct a self-evaluation and to provide the results to the external reviewers. It remains the case, however, that the lack of both a policy requirement and some guidance to departments under review about what is required and how best to achieve it are the most serious deficiencies in the Brock protocol and call for urgent corrective action. While the serious commitment of all concerned at Brock to the review process cannot be doubted, it is clear to the Auditors that the effectiveness of some of the actual reviews and the realization of their full potential as formative exercises were severely hampered by the lack of policy or guidelines or both.

The importance of self-appraisals and the need for guidelines on their purpose and content was illustrated to the Auditors by two of the reviews that were audited. In one, a serious miscue between department and external reviewers might have been avoided by having the unit frame the agenda with a self-reflection. In another, a unit bent over backwards to provide "some basic and (hopefully) non-controversial facts,"deliberately eschewing "assessment from the department's point of view, of the program's successes and failures," which allowed it to avoid confronting serious issues that were raised by the external reviewers.

Finally, the UPR Framework looks for self-appraisal by professors **and students**. Students did seem to be involved in program reviews at Brock by meeting with external reviewers, but not otherwise.

Recommendation 2: The Brock policy should be amended to require self-appraisal by professors and students participating in the program.

One possible approach might be for departments and programs under review to produce a report on the same issues that external reviewers are expected to address, with specific questions or suggestions for reviewers' feedback. In the Auditors' view, the best time for the self-appraisal is **before** the instructions are given to the external reviewer(s). Additionally, the Senate CAP, or the Brock administration, should consider sponsoring workshops to assist units in the task, at least while the requirement is new and unfamiliar. Guidelines might be written and an individual or committee could be designated as a source of advice. If units offer interdisciplinary programs, the other units involved in formulating and delivering the program should participate in the self-appraisal.

b) evaluation by at least one expert from another university, including universities outside Ontario;

This requirement is part of the Brock policy statements, and it was the practice in all the reviews that were audited. While the campus visit is well described, again, guidelines for the external reviewers would be useful.

Recommendation 3: Though there is no evidence to question the impartiality of the external evaluators who have been chosen by Brock University, the auditors recommend that all Ontario universities that have not already done so enunciate as part of their program review policy the principle that external evaluators will be at arm's length from the program under review, along with their interpretation of what is entailed by the principle (not relatives, collaborators, supervisors/supervisees, and so on).

c) appraisal by peers chosen from among professors from the institution who do not participate in the program under review;

This requirement in the UPR Framework calls for an interdisciplinary perspective to ensure that university-wide standards for review are met in all cases. How this requirement is met by universities may vary according to size, structure and ethos. At Brock, the Senate Committee on Academic Policy (CAP) plays this role, but it is the opinion of the Auditors that CAP's role needs to be more clearly defined if it truly is to have an evaluative function. To illustrate, by the time the dean has sent the written report to the Senate (a procedural formality for submitting it to CAP), the dean will have already met with the academic unit "to consider implementation of Recommendations which may be appropriate" so the evaluative phase is over. It is the Auditors' view that if CAP, or any other committee, is to meet the requirement for appraisal by peers, it

should be involved in the process at an earlier stage than at present. It would certainly be most appropriate for the dean to be part of this stage.

> **Recommendation 4:** The terms of reference of the Senate Standing Committee on Academic Policy should specify its function when it is considering the documentation from the review process. The documentation should include the departmental self-appraisal and the external evaluators' reports.

> *d) the university may also, where appropriate, seek the advice of others such as representatives of industry, professions and practical training programs;*

Brock's policy clearly allows for this.

> **Suggestion 4:** The policy should make it clear that there must always be at least one evaluator who is an academic even when the advice of others is sought.

> *(4) specify the procedures for action on the recommendations arising from the undergraduate program review;*

There is provision for discussion within the department, discussion with the dean, and the possibility of a progress report requested by CAP. What is lacking is a mechanism to summarize the action to be taken, which would be subject to monitoring and future assessment.

> **Suggestion 5:** The policy would be strengthened if it were to specify the steps that should follow the adoption of the recommendations arising from a program review. There should also be a requirement to report to CAP after a year or two.

> *(5) determine the periodicity of the review cycle; this should not exceed 10 years for a university's full set of programs;*

The Brock policy complies, requiring programs to go through a review at least every seven years, and the review schedule meets that requirement. Since the review cycle just started, it is premature to assess whether the proposed cycle is being followed.

> *(6) establish a policy to ensure publication of a summary of the institutional review report (excluding all personal information); the summary should include a statement of the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and an outline of the main*

> *recommendations of the review committee. This summary is to be presented to the Senate and Board of Governors of the university.*

Brock has such a policy; however, it does not categorically require the summary report to go to the Board, but only "when appropriate, transmit the document to the University President for distribution to the Board of Trustees."

> **Recommendation 5**: The policy should be amended to make the transmittal of the Senate's summary of external reviews to the Board of Trustees standard practice in all cases.

5.2.3 ***Elements of the Undergraduate Program Review***

The institutional procedure for review of existing undergraduate programs should address the following points:

> *(1) consistency of the program with the general objectives of the institution's mission and development plan;*

The basic academic mission of the university was so well understood by everyone with whom the Auditors met that it may go without saying. As observed above, however, Brock's mission may not be so well understood by the external evaluators, whose participation is an essential feature of the review process, and who need that understanding to discharge their function effectively. This element of a review is a valid criterion and one that needs to be explicitly included.

> **Recommendation 6**: An evaluation of the consistency of programs with the appropriate sections of the university's mission statement should be added as a requirement of the review policy.

> *(2) appropriateness of the admission requirements for the program's educational objectives;*

This is not a requirement of the February 1996 review policy. (It is noted that it was not a factor in any of the three programs whose reviews were selected for audit, with the possible exception of Physics whose students would require a certain level of preparation in mathematics in order to have a reasonable chance of success.)

> **Recommendation 7:** The university review policy should include a reference to the evaluation of the appropriateness of admission requirements where academically warranted.

(3) appropriateness of the program's structure and curriculum for its educational objectives;

(4) appropriateness of mode of delivery and of methods used for the evaluation of student progress;

These requirements are covered in brief in the policy, though they are, with the exception of "methods used for the evaluation of student progress," addressed at greater length in the document Department or Program Review which, as noted, still serves as a source of guidance for the drafting of the external reviewers' terms of reference. Implementation of Recommendation 1 would give additional emphasis to them.

(5) appropriate utilization of the existing human/physical/financial resources;

This element is covered both in the Workload, and the Facilities and Support sections of the Department or Program Review document, and as with several other "Elements," should be added to the review criteria.

(6) definition of indicators that provide evidence of:

- *quality of faculty;*
- *student clientele (applications and registrations);*
- *student quality; and*
- *outcomes of the program (graduation rate, length of studies, etc.).*

Among the details to be provided to the external reviewer are enrolment records, teaching loads, curricula vitae and graduation rates as well as "any other information which is appropriate," but there is no specification of "indicators" as such — difficult as it may be to find common agreement on what they should be. Information is available and there is genuine willingness on the part of those who can provide it to do so and on the part of those who would use it to make better use of such data and analytical tools to interpret it. Brock conducts a post-graduation survey that may be a valuable source of information to feed into the review process.

Suggestion 6: The review policy should provide more explicit description of the quality indicators that could form part of the review dossier. (See also Suggestion 1.)

The issue of quality indicators is a matter of continuing concern. Criteria that measure the quality of incoming or departing students or some assessment of the "improvement factor" are issues that deserve consideration by OCAV.

6 Conformity of the Brock University Policy and Procedures for the Implementation of New Undergraduate Programs to the UPR Framework for New Programs

The UPR Framework for the implementation of new undergraduate programs states that:

> *(1) the institution should provide to the auditors its policy regarding the implementation of new undergraduate programs;*
>
> *(2) the institutional procedures for the implementation of new undergraduate programs should address points [a) - e)] above and provide evidence of the quality of the faculty.*

Much of what was said in the opening paragraph of section 5 holds here too. The Terms of Reference, found in the Brock Faculty Handbook, clearly set out the responsibilities of the Senate Standing Committee on Academic Policy for the oversight and approval of the introduction of new undergraduate programs. These Terms of Reference and the record of the approval of the new Oenology and Viticulture Program — the one selected for the audit — predate the establishment of the UPR Framework. The Auditors were presented with considerable documentation for the introduction of this program. They have no reason to question the thoroughness with which it was scrutinized, and the process appeared to follow the procedures Brock established for the introduction of new programs. However, more detailed guidelines are needed in order to allow for an audit of compliance.

One way of viewing what OCAV has demanded in the UPR Framework is that, consistent with the information requirements now imposed by the Ministry of Education and Training for funding approval of new "non-core" programs, universities should be taking into account the consistency of what is proposed with their more general development plans. Specifically, they should address the issue of whether this is an appropriate use of available resources, as well as provide some critical scrutiny of the quality of the new activity (as gauged by curriculum, delivery, quality of faculty, and so on) following the requirements set out in the UPR Framework.

> **Recommendation 8:** The provisions governing the implementation of new programs at Brock University, as at all Ontario universities, should be revised consistently with both the Ministry of Education and Training information requirements that need not be supplied in detail but must be certified by the president of the university in funding applications as set out in the MET memorandum regarding Program Approvals Process on November 8, 1996, and the UPR Framework found in Appendix A 1.4.

7 Conclusion

The Auditors wish to note that they believe the Undergraduate Program Review Audit Procedure reinforces and supports the commitment of Ontario's universities to offering programs of the highest quality. It builds on the internal quality assurance processes that the institutions have put in place. Based on their own experience as senior academic administrators, the Auditors recognize the importance of such processes in maintaining and improving the quality of education that universities deliver to undergraduates. Also, they appreciate the difficulty the institutions face in times of fiscal constraint. The pressures are immense.

It is to the credit of the institutions that they are committed to self-examination and renewal in order to offer programs of excellent quality. A regular, institution-wide series of undergraduate program reviews is a serious and demanding undertaking. These reviews are not the only ones that departments and other academic units undergo, and the demands on the faculty and staff are considerable. For this reason, the Auditors have been most impressed by how thoroughly and carefully Brock University and the University of Ottawa, the two institutions that were audited in 1997, have approached their undergraduate review process.

As a general conclusion, the Auditors are satisfied that, in regard to both policy and practice, Brock University's process for undergraduate program reviews conforms closely to the UPR Framework. As already observed, the university's practice goes beyond what is required by its policy. They have noted with recommendations and suggestions where the policy might be improved and made to conform more closely with the UPR Framework. The most significant of these are the recommendations having to do with the requirement for a program's self-appraisal, the role of the Senate committee, CAP, and follow-up to the reviews.

8 Summary of Recommendations and Suggestions

Finally, for ease of reference the Recommendations and Suggestions are repeated here:

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: The Brock policy should be amended to include a clear statement of the objective(s) for the reviews of existing undergraduate programs. Given the importance of interdisciplinary programs to the university, the policy should indicate clearly how they are reviewed.

Recommendation 2: The Brock policy should be amended to require self-appraisal by professors and students participating in the program.

Recommendation 3: Though there is no evidence to question the impartiality of the external evaluators who have been chosen by Brock University, the auditors recommend that all Ontario universities that have not already done so enunciate as part of their program review policy the principle that external evaluators will be at arm's length from the program under review, along with their interpretation of what is entailed by the principle (not relatives, collaborators, supervisors/supervisees, and so on).

Recommendation 4: The terms of reference of the Senate Standing Committee on Academic Policy should specify its function when it is considering the documentation from the review process. The documentation should include the departmental self-appraisal and the external evaluators' reports.

Recommendation 5: The policy should be amended to make the transmittal of the Senate's summary of external reviews to the Board of Trustees standard practice in all cases.

Recommendation 6: An evaluation of the consistency of programs with the appropriate sections of the university's mission statement should be added as a requirement of the review policy.

Recommendation 7: The university review policy should include a reference to the evaluation of the appropriateness of admission requirements where academically warranted.

Recommendation 8: The provisions governing the implementation of new programs at Brock University, as at all Ontario universities, should be revised consistently with both the Ministry of Education and Training information requirements that need not be supplied in detail but must be certified by the president of the university in funding applications as set out in the MET memorandum regarding Program Approvals Process on November 8, 1996, and the UPR Framework found in Appendix A 1.4.

Suggestions:

Suggestion 1: The difficulty in making relevant data and analysis available to those involved in the review is by no means unique to Brock. If, however, reviews are to be meaningful, and if recommendations and decisions on whether or not to accept them are to be based on evidence, it is vitally important that Brock and other universities address the perceived difficulties in the manner that best accords with their individual needs and organization.

Suggestion 2: The absence in the policy of reference to a central authority with ultimate responsibility for the reviews need never cause a problem at Brock, since it is clear to all of the parties concerned that the review process is vital to the academic health of the institution, and the Auditors are satisfied as to their commitment to the process. However, since the Auditors

understand that CAP is disposed to review the policy document in fuller light of the UPR Framework, they commend this matter to their attention and that of the Vice-President, Academic.

Suggestion 3: The document Department or Program Review or some version of it might usefully be added as an appendix to the policy document in order to more explicitly "define the undergraduate program review criteria."

Suggestion 4: The policy should make it clear that there must always be at least one evaluator who is an academic even when the advice of others is sought.

Suggestion 5: The policy would be strengthened if it were to specify the steps that should follow the adoption of the recommendations arising from a program review. There should also be a requirement to report to CAP after a year or two.

Suggestion 6: The review policy should provide more explicit description of the quality indicators that could form part of the review dossier. (See also Suggestion 1.)

Appendix 1 — Schedule for Program of Audits in First Cycle: 1997-2003

Year in Cycle	Calendar Year	Universities		
1	1997	Brock	Ottawa	---
2	1998	Western	Windsor	---
3	1999	Carleton	Queen's	Nipissing
4	2000	Lakehead	York	---
5	2001	Ryerson	Toronto	Trent
6	2002	Laurentian	Waterloo	---
7	2003	Guelph	McMaster	Wilfrid Laurier

Appendix 2 — List of the Names of the Auditors

Dr. Naomi Griffiths:

Adjunct Research Professor, Department of History, Carleton University; Dean, Faculty of Arts, Carleton University, 1979-87

Dr. Ross Rudolph:

Professor, Department of Political Science, York University; Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts, 1985-88; Associate Vice-President (Faculties), York University, 1990-1996

Dr. Edward Stansbury:

Professor Emeritus, Meteorology, McGill University; Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science, 1969-71; Dean, Faculty of Science, 1971-76; Vice-Principal, Planning, McGill University, 1976-86; Member, la Commission de vérification de l'évaluation des programmes, Québec

Appendix 3 — List of the Principal Documents Provided by Brock University

External Review of Undergraduate Programs. Policy document approved by the Senate. February 1996.

Department or Program Review. Guidelines for external reviewers. 1992.

Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, *Revised Procedures on Undergraduate Program Review*. Undated.

Faculty Handbook, Sections II 9.4, "Standing Committee on Academic Policy" and Section III 7.9, "Program Approval."

Cade, William H. Letter from the Acting Vice-President, Academic, containing the schedule of reviews of undergraduate programs. April 14, 1997.

Documentation for the reviews of the undergraduate programs in Geography (1994), Philosophy (1994-95) and Physics (1994-95) includes: letters to the external reviewers from the deans, reports from the external reviewers, department profile (1), letters (2) to the deans containing comments of the chairs, and extract from the minutes of the meeting of Senate, May 14, 1997.

Documentation for the implementation of the new undergraduate program in Oenology and Viticulture includes: "Oenology and Viticulture Proposal", the Report to Senate of the Committee on Academic Policy, April 30, 1996, and extract from the minutes of the meeting of Senate, May 8, 1996.

Appendix 4 — Schedule for the Site Visit

9:00 a.m.	Dr. Susan Clark, Acting President
10:00 a.m.	Dean Will Webster, Faculty of Social Sciences Dean John Sivell, Faculty of Humanities Acting Dean Rick Cheel, Faculty of Mathematics and Science
11:00 a.m.	Professor John Mayer, Chair, Department of Philosophy
1:30 p.m.	Professor Keith Tinkler, Chair, Department of Geography
2:30 p.m.	Professor Fereidoon Razavi, Chair, Department of Physics, and representatives from the department
3:30 p.m.	Professor Jack Miller, Chair, Senate Committee on Academic Policy Members of the Committee: Professors Barry Joe, Garth Stevenson, Angus Somerville and Merle Richards Professor Ken McKay, Chair of Senate